



The Vermont Women's Fund

Philanthropy Inspiring Vermont Women & Girls Since 1995

A Component Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation

December 2007

Triumph and Transformation

The 3rd Annual Holly D. Miller Awards

Each year in honor of Burlington philanthropist and former VWF Council member Holly D. Miller, The Vermont Women's Fund asks our grantees to nominate a woman or girl whose life has been changed through her involvement with a project we have funded. Many previously untold stories of triumph and transformation come back to us from the field, revealing the strength of women and girls across the state. The stories of this year's inspirational awardees, nominated by **Girls on the Run**, **Bennington Coalition for the Homeless and Safeline**, show us all that deep change often happens one step, one woman at a time.

Jessica Morse-Demons never intended to end up homeless, but she counts herself lucky for the time she and her four children spent in the **Bennington Coalition for the Homeless** "Housing Matters" program. They arrived at the 6 Bank Street Transitional Shelter in North Bennington when all other support failed. After leaving her abusive husband and losing her home, Jessica and her children made their way back to Bennington where she'd grown up and where her brother still lived.



Jessica Morse-Demons (left) receiving her award from Holly Miller.

When housing with him fell through, she was forced to move into the shelter.

Once there, however, she took full advantage of the three-month "Housing Matters" program, which helps homeless families learn the fundamentals of household care, budgeting, and other essential life skills. With support of the shelter staff, she went back to school and is on her way to getting her high school diploma at last. She found a good job and eventually transitioned into her own apartment—a permanent home for her family. The staff helped her buy furniture, get a car loan and still provides support when she needs it. "The staff really cares about the people they help, like me and my kids. I'm really proud they have a place like this in North Bennington."

Brittney DeKalb and **Robyn Neil**, both 6th graders at Mettowee Community School in West Pawlett, were nominated by **Girls on the Run**, a nationwide program that prepares pre-teen girls for a lifetime of respect and healthy living through running.



Brittney DeKalb

Though Brittney, a vivacious 12 year-old, has struggled with obesity all her life, she hasn't let it hold her back. Last year she joined the Girls on the Run program and it changed her life in ways she never imagined. "I learned it's not about how fast you run, it's about not giving up," she explained. At the end of the program last year, Brittney finished her first 5k race. Crossing the finish line, she was greeted by a cheering crowd and her picture was snapped for the front page of *The Rutland Herald*. "Girls *can* change," she said. Because of Girls on the Run, Brittney knows what it feels like to be a winner.

For Robyn, 11, Girls on the Run has provided much needed support since her mother died last summer. "When my Mom died, Girls on the Run took my mind off everything. It was the place I could go to have fun and be with friends." The program also gave



Robyn Neil

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to help her three siblings and her father. "I helped my dad stay on track so he wouldn't forget things. I also helped teach my brothers and sisters to get along so we could all spend time together without fighting." Robyn is proud of the progress she's made while participating in Girls on the Run.

After 20 years in an emotionally and physically abusive relationship, **Shelly Murphy** took the giant step of leaving her marriage. "I always considered family as everything. I thought my kids needed both Mom and

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The Vermont Women's Fund is dedicated to making grants that support the advancement, self-sufficiency, and economic & social equality of Vermont women and girls.

We encourage all women to be philanthropists and use their collective financial power to help shape Vermont's future.

We are a member of the international women's funding movement, with leadership provided by a diverse group of women from across the state.

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Why We Give

By Susan Ritz—Council Chair

"Why should I give to The Vermont Women's Fund instead of directly to your grantees? What can the VWF do that I can't do by myself?" These are two good questions I am often asked by potential new donors.



My first reaction is always "Give to everyone you can!" Then I go on to explain that the VWF Council works long and hard considering proposals from all over the state and makes grants that we believe put our donors' funds into projects with the highest potential for success. We do the due diligence for you.

We also work proactively to address core issues that keep women and girls from reaching their full potential. Through our new Strategic Partners Initiative, The Vermont Women's Fund is building collaborative partnerships among grantees who focus on economic security issues. This allows us to take a deeper look at both problems and solutions.

In addition, I point out that by offering grants, the VWF encourages non-profits to create innovative projects specifically designed for women and girls, such as girls' camps and women's substance abuse programs.

Finally, I tell them that as a donor to The Vermont Women's Fund you join a community of women and men who believe in the power of collective giving. Building a better Vermont requires us all to join hands and work together. The Vermont Women's Fund offers us each an opportunity to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

Comings and Goings

Thank You Nancy Chiquoine!

In September, VWF Executive Director Nancy Chiquoine moved on to a challenging new position as Director of Marketing & Resident Services at Wake Robin in Shelburne. Though her time with us was short, Nancy's insight, experience and contacts with women throughout the state helped the VWF reach a new level of maturity. The Vermont Women's Fund took giant leaps with Nancy's guidance, and thanks to her we are ready for an even more dynamic future.



Welcome Catherine Kalkstein!

We are excited to announce the arrival of our new Director, Catherine Kalkstein, who comes to us after 5 years as Director of the Fairfield County (CT) Community Foundation Fund for Women and Girls. She brings exceptional professional experience and a profound understanding of the women's funding movement.

Prior to earning her Master's Degree from Columbia University School of Social Work, Catherine spent two years on the development staff at the Domestic Violence Crisis Center in Norwalk Connecticut and two years as the Director of Development at My Sister's Place, a program for battered women and their children in Washington, D.C. At the Fund for Women and Girls she helped launch an innovative program of strategic, proactive grantmaking, and helped raise an endowment of \$10 million making it the largest women's fund in New England.

We are looking forward to introducing Catherine to our supporters when she comes on board in January. Catherine's experience, foresight and energy are just what the VWF needs to lead us into our second decade of grantmaking and inspiring philanthropy throughout Vermont.

Dad, so I kept trying to make it work." Finally, last year, when her husband cut Shelly off from the money she made at three jobs, she decided it was time to stand up for herself. She was at rock bottom when she found **Safeline, Inc.**, which provides respite and advocacy services to victims of domestic and sexual abuse within Orange County. The knowledgeable staff helped her get a "relief from abuse" order and start divorce proceedings. "They helped me when I didn't even have a bed. They offered me and my kids clothes, shoes, a car, everything. They were even there with hugs when I needed to cry even at 2 in the morning." Shelly now has a great job at Gifford Medical Center and is living with her mother and father who have supported her every step of the way. "Finally I see a light at the end of the tunnel. Sometimes it's very thin, but with the support of my family and Safeline, I keep coming back."



Shelly Murphy with Holly Miller

On October 11th, over 200 friends of The Vermont Women's Fund came together at the Elley-Long Music Center in Colchester to hear these awardees share their stories and celebrate the power of Vermont women making change. In addition to her award, each honoree also received a \$200 check from the Women's Fund to donate to her nominating organization and join the ranks of philanthropists working to ensure a strong and vibrant future for our state.

The event was a wonderful opportunity for Women's Fund supporters to catch up with friends, bid on a silent auction for Flash Bags, and laugh along with keynote speaker author Lisa Alther. Guests also had the chance to view displays and meet representatives from 16 organizations who came to share stories about the work they do with grants made possible by VWF supporters. This annual awards celebration is the largest fundraising event of the year for the Women's Fund, and thanks in part to a men's "challenge" tribute initiated by Holly's husband, Bobby Miller, the event raised \$30,000 to help The Vermont Women's Fund keep doing what it does best—supporting the dreams of Vermont women and girls. 🍀

"I learned it's not about how fast you run, it's about not giving up."

Brittney DeKalb

In Their Own Words...

Finding Home

By Nora Lovelette

Washington County Youth Service Bureau, Transitional Living Program Coordinator



Pregnancy and motherhood often result in a combination of excitement, awe, love and ANXIETY. Young women in Washington County Youth Service Bureau's (YSB) Transitional Living Program (TLP) have all these feelings. However, they must also struggle to meet basic needs such as a home, food, and adequate support from loved ones. TLP helps these pregnant and parenting women make the transition to secure and healthy living situations. The program helps them find long-term shelter and provides life skills training, support and advocacy. TLP also assists them in making connections with other area services.

"I am continually amazed and inspired by the strength of these young women."

When the Youth Service Bureau received the grant from The Vermont Women's Fund we were at capacity for housing assistance. We were working with 3 pregnant women. Two were homeless and



Program participant Chelsea McElroy and daughter, Kaliyah

one was in unstable housing. We were about to put these women on a waitlist for housing assistance – a heartbreaking thing to do. Thanks to The Vermont Women's Fund all three young women were able to find stable housing prior to the birth of their babies.

The Vermont Women's Fund also provided a unique opportunity to make a local connection. During the grantee awards ceremony in May, fellow grantee Nancy Lynch of Safeline Inc. approached me and volunteered her services as a childbirth educator. The TLP participants were thrilled to have private childbirth lessons. They had been feeling uncomfortable about attending classes, partly because they were unsure who would be with them during the birth, but Nancy came in and immediately established a great rapport.

I'm continually amazed and inspired by the strength of these young women.

For more information about this and other programs from Washington County Youth Service Bureau, please contact Nora Lovelette at 802.229.9151 or nlovelette@youthservicebureau.info

Youth Service Bureau



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Re-defining Reality for Vermont Women & Girls

A Special Thank You...

On November 8th, more than 225 women from around Vermont attended the 6th Annual KeyBank4Women Forum in Burlington. They gathered to hear inspiring stories, discussion and ideas on how to empower themselves and harness their greatest attributes to achieve success. Proceeds from the event, totaling more than \$4,700, were donated to The Vermont Women's Fund.

Thank you KeyBank!



*VWF Chair, Susan Ritz, with KeyBank
President, Scott Carpenter*

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Celebrate the Collective Power of Philanthropy!

*Please make your year-end gift
to The Vermont Women's Fund today
and join the women and men from all
walks of life working to create a stronger,
more equitable Vermont!*

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tax-deductible donation:
www.vermontwomensfund.org**